



**Director of  
Central  
Intelligence**

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# **Zaire: Is It Reformable?**

**Interagency Intelligence Memorandum**

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## **ZAIRE: IS IT REFORMABLE?**

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## PREFACE

This Interagency Intelligence Memorandum is limited in scope and addresses four basic questions: is Mobutu's Zaire "reformable"; why has no revolt against the Mobutu regime taken place; what would be the impact if the United States distanced itself from Mobutu; and what would be the impact of Mobutu's fall from power?

Included is an annex on the importance of Zaire's cobalt to the West.

This memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Africa with contributions from the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. It has been coordinated at the working level.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

Although President Mobutu of Zaire has taken steps in the political and economic spheres he would not have taken without external pressure, he has done nothing he could not reverse if he became convinced that the costs outweighed the benefits. Mobutu is likely to continue to oppose or circumvent efforts to alter significantly his style of rule. He has moved ahead just enough on reforms, however, to make premature the conclusion that additional progress under his leadership is not possible.

Far-reaching reform in the Western sense would invite upheaval by stimulating popular expectations and undermining the system centered on Mobutu that has provided stability so far.

There are limited economic, political, and military reforms, however, that would not threaten his regime, and might well strengthen it. Even these Mobutu would not be likely to make in the absence of foreign pressure; he realizes he must be responsive to his external supporters.

By allowing foreign powers to assume key roles in addressing some of Zaire's major problems, Mobutu gains room for maneuver and links Belgium, France, and the United States to his own survival.

The impact of placing some distance between the United States and Mobutu would be minor in the absence of concurrent action by France and Belgium, which are likely to continue to support him regardless of his response to pressures for change.

Pent-up pressures in Kinshasa could explode at any time and topple Mobutu, and he could be challenged from unexpected quarters. Revolt has been averted thus far because of disarray within the opposition, Mobutu's skillful manipulation of potential challengers, repression by the security forces, and apprehension among many Zairians that the country without him would return to the chaos of the early 1960s. Zaire's size and diversity reduce the chance that a revolt, once started, could spread. Moreover, African social institutions provide safety valves that relieve somewhat the intense pressures of urban poverty.

If Mobutu were to depart the scene, it is possible that he would be quickly replaced by a military junta which could hold the country together. It is more likely, however, that a prolonged and bloody struggle for power would ensue. The turmoil could well spread from

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Kinshasa to other parts of the country, reviving secessionist tendencies. Turbulence or disintegration in Zaire could hardly fail to have an impact on Zaire's neighbors in a variety of ways, not the least of which is the possibility that Zaire would again become a theater for rivalries among external powers.

A major impact of Mobutu's replacement by an anti-Western regime would be on the African, European, and Arab perceptions of the United States. Conservative African leaders might see it as a further shift in the balance of forces against them; Europeans and Arabs would see it as further evidence of the United States' inability or unwillingness to protect its friends.

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## DISCUSSION

1. Zaire's problems loom larger to the United States and other Western countries than those of most other African nations, even though similar difficulties can also be found elsewhere on the continent. First, Zaire's size, economic potential, and mineral resources make its international alignment important to the West. Second, its regime is closely associated by much of the world with the West in general and with the United States in particular. Third, the plight of its people, in the face of inefficient government and economic regression, and the association of President Mobutu's government with corruption and arbitrary treatment of his people have led many in the West to question the morality of Western support for his regime.

2. The military incursion into the mineral-rich Shaba region in March 1977 by Zairian exiles based in Angola revealed the extent to which the Mobutu regime had been weakened by a combination of world market factors and poor management since its zenith in 1972-73. In response to growing domestic and international pressures, the latter principally from the United States, Mobutu announced in July 1977 that major political, military, and economic reforms would be implemented. The most significant political reforms proved to be the holding of competitive elections to fill seats in the legislature, the members of which had previously been appointed, and the creation of the office of prime minister. Responsibility for upgrading Zaire's armed forces was placed primarily on the Belgian and French military missions. The resultant Belgian-trained 21st Infantry Brigade and the French-trained 31st Paratroop Brigade represent a significant strengthening of Zaire's military capability. The central elements of economic reform in Zaire have been adherence to an International Monetary Fund standby agreement and reliance on expatriates to staff key positions at the Bank of Zaire, the Ministry of Finance, and Customs.

3. In general, there now are two contending schools of thought concerning reform. Some believe that the present regime can be brought to a point of significant reform, that some of the changes that Mobutu has already made are irreversible and will alter the nature of the regime. Others contend that no real change has

occurred and that Mobutu must go if the current "*mal Zairois*" is to be cured.

#### The Belgian Legacy: The Early Years in the Congo

4. Although the difficulties that President Mobutu and his predecessors have faced in trying to establish Zaire as a viable and cohesive state are hardly unique in Africa, the legacy of Belgium's colonial paternalism and its hasty retreat from its principal African territory virtually assured an inauspicious beginning. In contrast to the relatively orderly preparations for independence that were instituted by the French and British—in which political parties took root and aspiring politicians were gradually brought into the administrative and political systems—the Congolese were grossly ill prepared to take over the administration of the new state.

5. By the time Mobutu seized power in 1965, Zaire had experienced practically everything that could go wrong in a newly independent African country. Independence was followed by an Army mutiny, debilitating political infighting, fragmentation of the country along ethnic lines, three regional secessions, and a series of peasant uprisings. Many of these developments were exacerbated by outside interests, including those of some West European and Communist nations. Five years of independence had left the political, economic, and social life of the country in ruins.

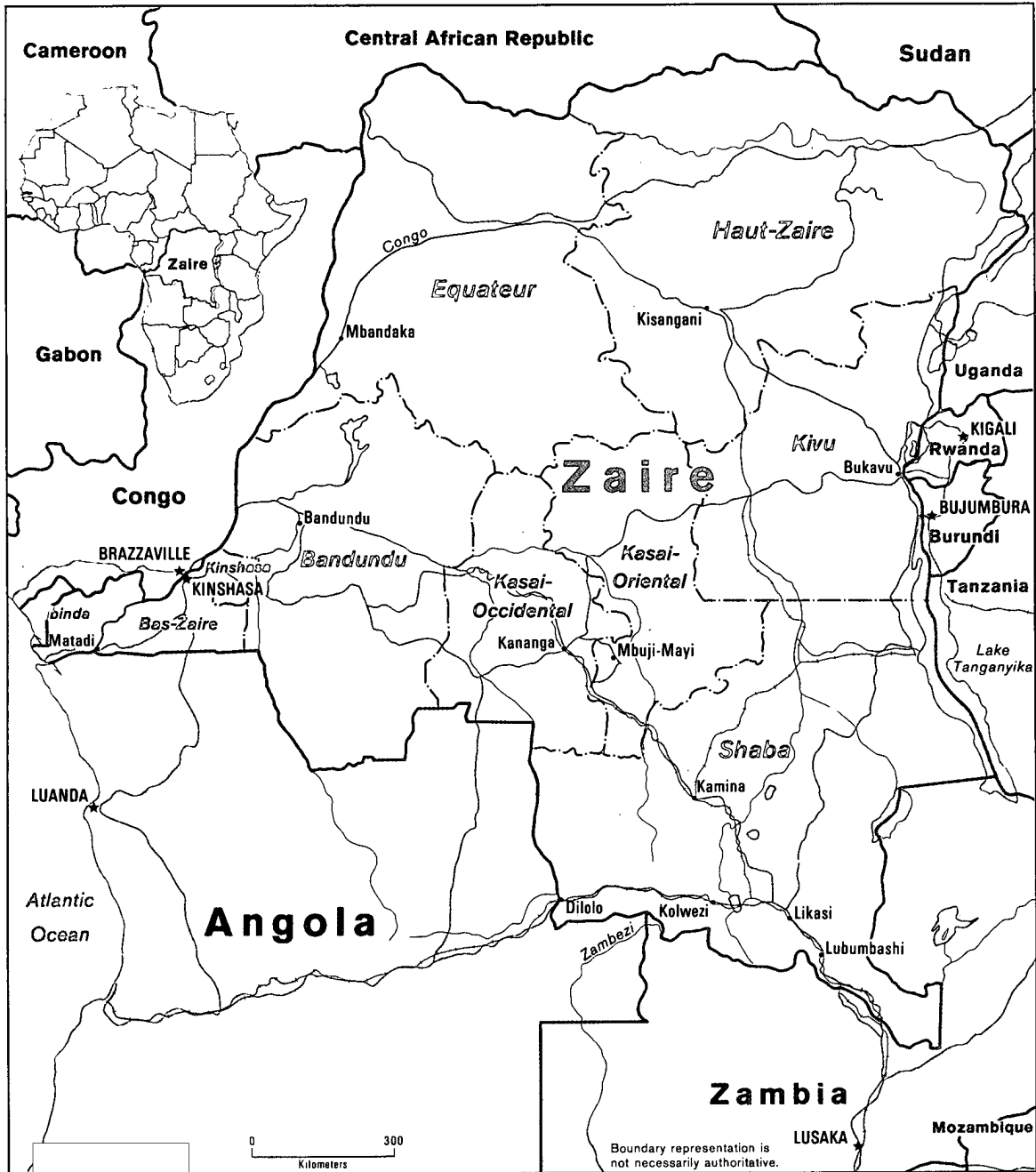
6. The pre-Mobutu regimes depended heavily on external economic and technical assistance, including the continued service of large numbers of foreign civilian and military specialists. Indeed, the foreign rescue operations that were mobilized to maintain the country's viability during the tumultuous early 1960s—ranging from economic inputs from aid contributors and private investors to UN peacekeeping forces—have remained permanent features of Zaire's history. They were manifested more recently by the French, Belgian, and Moroccan involvement in the Shaba crises of 1977 and 1978 and by international efforts to maintain the government's solvency. Unlike many other African countries where foreign involve-



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ment is rebuffed as neocolonialism, or at least is less visible to the outside world, Zaire under Mobutu welcomes it—albeit selectively. Foreign involvement has become an essential part of the way Mobutu manipulates the country's political dynamics.

### The "Pax Mobutu"

7. Even Mobutu's harshest critics grudgingly acknowledge his success in maintaining a reasonable degree of domestic peace and order in Zaire. Except for opponents within the Zairian elite, many observers until recently found few faults with Mobutu's efforts at maintaining stability. They viewed the political system he began to construct after he came to power as being not markedly unlike regimes that were emerging in other parts of the continent as African leaders replaced the political frameworks left behind by the former metropolises. Such moves as the establishment of the MPR (Popular Revolutionary Movement) as the sole political party and the gradual extension of Mobutu's control over the armed forces were seen as logical steps to strengthen the central government and prevent a return to chaos.

8. Neighboring states were relieved that "the Congo problem" no longer threatened their own stability and shared the general African satisfaction that a blemish had been removed from Africa's record. During the "Pax Mobutu" period that lasted through the early 1970s and was marked by relatively substantial revenues from copper and other mineral resources, few private investors or others in the international community seemed to worry about how Zaire was governed, but instead were more concerned with the investment climate.

9. Although the innermost workings of Mobutu's circle of cronies and advisers remain obscure, the basic details of how his system works are generally known and have not changed significantly since he took power. He rules more as a paramount tribal chief than as a head of state in the Western sense. He is secretive, ruthless (although less so in recent years), and politically astute, and has a talent for catching potential challengers and foreign leaders off balance and for exploiting tribal jealousies. He adroitly handles the military, judiciously dispenses largesse and punishment, funds pet projects, and indulges in luxuries without being directly accountable to any authority. He also rules by employing a crisis management approach to problems, marshaling seemingly nonexistent domestic and external resources to resolve or defer

what appear to others as insoluble economic and political problems.

10. Mobutu distrusts Western-style democratic institutions because he believes they would give free reign to the divided loyalties and opportunism that have disrupted Zaire in the past. In the early 1970s, when Zaire had emerged from a decade of internal rebellions, Mobutu embarked on a series of political changes that were intended to create the framework of a one-party state, to introduce into Zaire something of the aura of an African "radical" state, and to give himself the legitimacy that came from identification with the African political mainstream. Perhaps the best known of these enterprises was his unsuccessful attempt to carry out his campaign for "authenticity"—a kind of cultural revolution which had precedents in other African countries and which emphasized political solidarity by stressing the introduction of "authentic" indigenous practices to replace "colonial" ways (for example, changes in personal names from Europeanized to vernacular forms). This was also an attempt to create a sense of national unity, no doubt inspired by Mobutu's confidence that he was in full control and by the vague philosophies of other African leaders who have sought to construct a framework for their own particular style of rule. In the event, neither authenticity in its various ramifications nor any of the other innovations that Mobutu attempted to introduce in the early 1970s took deep root and Zaire's political system has remained a highly personalized one.

### The Current Malaise and Mobutu's Response

11. After 15 years, "Pax Mobutu" is still little more than a truce enforced through Mobutu's domination of the instruments of power. Tribal and regional tensions persist, and social and economic problems—including inflation, unemployment, labor and student unrest, periodic shortages of necessities, and deteriorating infrastructure—are now acute.

12. Many factors contribute to Zaire's current difficulties—including a severe deterioration of the terms of trade, the invasions of Shaba, costly economic blunders, the burgeoning foreign debt, and the pilfering of scarce foreign exchange. The resulting deterioration of the economy and public services has stimulated public discontent, while international concern over human rights has rallied some of Mobutu's detractors around the central theme of reform. Mobutu's domestic problems have been compounded by his

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tendency—for a variety of reasons, including maintenance of his regime—to deal with their symptoms rather than their causes.

13. In gauging his response to the pressures on his regime, Mobutu has accurately perceived that there are divergent views among those who advocate change. Longtime Zairian opponents both inside and outside the country seem to believe that any change must be accompanied by Mobutu's departure. The United States and, to a lesser extent, France and Belgium recognize the need for stringent fiscal and monetary measures to halt the economic decline, but only the United States also places emphasis on the necessity of internal political changes. For the Belgians and French, economic recovery programs that result in nondisruptive political changes are acceptable, and Paris and Brussels seem content to let the United States take the lead and act as the lightning rod for any adverse reactions from Mobutu.

14. Mobutu believes he has the support of the Europeans regardless of his response to reform pressures. He also probably reasons that his critics are limited in dealing with him by the fear of severe unrest and an even less palatable outcome if he should leave the scene. Mobutu has responded skillfully to these various pressures, dragging out his response while he seeks to play off the outside players against each other, and at the same time weighing the impact of his actions on his control of the internal situation.

15. Mobutu has apparently concluded that the United States and his domestic opponents have similar notions about the changes that should be implemented. Although he realizes that no reforms will satisfy the Zairian intellectual elite, both this group and the United States tend to advocate structural changes in the government that accord with Western conceptions of how reform is induced. Consequently, Mobutu has only tinkered with the country's thinly rooted institutions. Among other things, he has appointed a Prime Minister and given him some responsibilities in the day-to-day operations of the government. The legislature has been allowed to voice some criticism of the regime. A number of corrupt officials have been replaced by competent technocrats, and a cabinet shakeup earlier this year appears to have improved the overall competence of the government's ministers. Against this backdrop, some judicial reforms have been enacted and amnesties for criminals and political dissidents have been announced in order to placate those who point out the repressive nature of his rule. Nevertheless, each move has usually been fol-

lowed at some point by other actions that are intended to signal to domestic critics that Mobutu is not prepared to go too far. In essence, he continues to rely primarily on his keen understanding of the system he has created to maintain himself in power.

16. Mobutu has shrewdly delegated major responsibility for solving the economic crisis to Western advisers and governments that are deeply involved in Zaire. By depending on them to come up with stopgap financial aid, to reassure and work with overseas financial institutions and investors, and to oversee Zaire's banking and customs operations, he has linked the United States, France, and Belgium to his own survival—a move which enables him in part to deflect domestic criticism of the economic situation to outsiders.

17. Mobutu has pursued a similar strategy in the military sphere. Because the armed forces are both the base of Mobutu's support and a potential threat to his rule, he probably has ruled out extensive changes in the military that would threaten his control of the officer corps. Economic constraints weigh against any substantial arms expenditures, and a need for continuous security has ruled out replacement of existing forces by totally new ones. Instead, prompted partly by Western pressure and partly by his own recognition of the need for improvement, Mobutu has put in train a series of important, though less sweeping, measures—reduction in the number of troops, creation of three new brigades, improvements in messing and pay, streamlining the chain of command, retraining a poorly disciplined infantry division, and establishment of a logistics corps. With the exception of the last two of these, measurable albeit halting progress has been made, although this has depended on about 200 Belgian and French advisers, some of whom accompany and command the units they have trained. Mobutu and key armed forces officers hope the reforms already made will become sufficiently institutionalized to last beyond the tenure of these advisers. One of the most significant of the reforms—the infusion of discipline in the armed forces—has proved less effective. Thus far, with the exception of the Belgian- and French-advised units, there does not seem to have been a significant crackdown designed to impress on the troops the importance of discipline.

#### Prospects for Reform

18. In allowing certain foreign powers to assume key roles in trying to solve Zaire's current problems, Mobutu has provided room for maneuver to continue

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his balancing act of maintaining himself in power while others tackle the intricacies of economic recovery and keep the regime afloat with financial aid and economic assistance. While this allows the United States, and to a lesser extent France and Belgium, to maintain some pressure on Mobutu to reduce the flagrantly corrupt practices that are part of his regime, Mobutu's response thus far strongly suggests that fundamental political reform—in Western terms—is neither his intention nor in his perception a possibility. Most of the basic decisions affecting the country's economic life will continue to be made in his office. Mobutu doubtless would allow further limited changes in the government and bureaucracy in order to appear responsive, calculating that the high officials and civil servants who are affected by such changes will be content to seek ways around them to survive economically.

19. Mobutu is no doubt aware of the pressure on his principal foreign supporters to distance themselves from his regime, although he probably has fewer doubts about France's resolve than he does about that of the United States or Belgium. He may reason, however, that his critics in the international community have been unable to offer a candidate for succession and that active opponents of serious stature either in Zaire or among the Zairian exiles abroad do not exist. He also perceives that most of the international community attaches as much—if not more—importance to access to Zaire's mineral resources and to the country's potential for affecting regional stability as to internal reform. Even those nearby African leaders who dislike Mobutu and are highly sensitive to foreign military rescue operations in support of African regimes would probably argue against disengagement on the grounds that Africa's and the West's interests would not be served if Mobutu's departure brought a return to the situation that existed in Zaire before he came to power. Mobutu views his trip to Europe and the United States late last year, his private contacts with French President Giscard, and French willingness to conclude occasional bilateral economic deals that circumvent the IMF program as commitments to his survival.

20. While Mobutu may perceive that the downward trend of US economic and military assistance represents a gradual disengagement, he could conclude that his ties to the French and the Belgians, and to conservative Arab governments that provide financial handouts, are sufficiently firm to enable him to lash out at the United States, as he has done in the past

when tensions have arisen in US-Zairian relations. If he judges that US pressures for reform are excessive, he might calculate that the US commitment to Zaire is so deep that a US response to any action he might take would be limited and would not endanger US-Zairian relations. Mobutu might gauge the success of any anti-US move on the lack of a negative US response to his stage-managed ouster of the US Ambassador in mid-1975.

21. On the other hand, Mobutu has seen his margin of maneuver reduced by Zaire's growing dependence on external financial assistance. Moreover, his exaggerated perception of US influence on the IMF (and the World Bank) has contributed to his acceptance, however reluctant, of far more US infringement on what he considers Zairian sovereignty than would have been conceivable in 1975.

#### The Impact of Reform on Stability

22. Fundamental political changes designed to liberalize the regime would substantially increase chances for instability by stimulating expectations and undermining the system Mobutu has assembled for maintaining control. If implemented now, these measures—such as creation of impersonal institutions and independent sources of power, introduction of a multi-party system, or devolution of significant lawmaking authority to parliament or regional bodies—would likely unleash the divisive tendencies in Zaire that Mobutu so far has managed to contain and use to his own advantage.

23. More limited changes, however, unless adopted simultaneously, would probably not threaten Mobutu's regime and might well strengthen it by allowing dissidents to vent their dissatisfaction in a controlled environment. Permitting the legislature to elect its officers without presidential interference would be one such measure, as would making regional assemblies centers of discussion about local problems. He could also grant his appointed prime minister authority to select and dismiss cabinet members.

24. The security forces likely offer somewhat more room for nonthreatening improvement than does the strictly political sphere. Further efforts to bolster the morale and effectiveness of troops—better training, more efficient pay and quartermaster systems, some new barracks and medical facilities, tighter discipline—would probably improve Mobutu's position by raising security force capabilities marginally. But dramatic improvement of military effectiveness would

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require stressing competence over ethnic background and personal loyalty to Mobutu within the officer corps. The President would have to relinquish control over officer assignments and perquisites—which would greatly improve chances of an eventual move by a military unit against him.

25. There is also a margin for additional reform in the economic arena. Although Mobutu will continue to need both ample funds for direct payoffs to key supporters and opportunities for them to exploit public positions for private gain, there appears to be considerable room for retrenchment in these areas. Progress on managing Zaire's foreign exchange earnings and reducing payroll skimming, for example, might cramp Mobutu's style somewhat but at no real political cost.

### Reasons for Absence of Revolt

26. Many observers wonder why major disturbances have not already occurred in view of the deteriorating quality of life in Zaire. They have argued that the chief danger to the Mobutu government would come in the form of spontaneous uprisings in such locales as Kinshasa and other urban centers. Aside from the Mobutu system that has been described, there are other factors that we believe have contributed to stability. Some are specific to Mobutu's Zaire: his manipulation of potential rivals, the relative efficacy of his security forces, the Zairian population's belief that the United States, France, and Belgium would intervene to prop him up, and the widespread desire to avoid a repetition of the violence of the early 1960s. Others, including ethnicity and income redistribution within the extended family, are features general to Africa.

27. During his 15-year tenure, Mobutu has been extraordinarily successful in controlling military plotting and political intrigue. Through a variety of methods—arrests, intimidation, bribery, rewards, and the shuffling of portfolios—he has been able to keep potential rivals off balance. His practice of filling government positions with individuals from minor ethnic groups means that there are few persons in positions of power who could command broad support. In the military, he has encouraged factionalism and promoted ethnic and regional tensions. He has periodically manipulated the chain of command to help keep the Army from becoming a unified, cohesive force. He has, moreover, staffed key military positions with presumably trusted officers from his own tribe or region.

28. Nevertheless, the military has the potential for a successful move against Mobutu, so he pays careful attention to it. No senior officers known to us present immediate threats to Mobutu's control. Any officer, regardless of his competence, who appears to be attracting a following of his own is shifted promptly to another job. Senior officers still need Mobutu—as do most members of his entourage—more than he needs them. This situation is likely to persist at least as long as the effective leaders of elite troops are the foreign training officers, now Belgian and French.

29. There is no obvious leader to galvanize discontent and exploit the regime's shortcomings. With the exception of a vague feeling of "anti-Mobutuism," there is no one ideology that appeals to a majority of Zairians. Most of Mobutu's opposition is based outside the country, either in Europe or in neighboring countries. With the exception of the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FLNC: ex-Katanga gendarmes), which has some contacts inside the Shaba region, external opponents have few links within Zaire. They are unable to organize effectively, and none has an effective propaganda machine. Although France and Belgium host numerous anti-Mobutu groups and individuals, these governments have not and probably would not allow such groups to engage in serious action to destabilize the regime even if they possessed the potential to do so.

30. Another factor is the effectiveness of the security services—the Army and security police. Although ragtag and unprofessional by Western standards, they can contain limited local uprisings and are able to monitor antigovernment activities both at home and abroad. Moreover, their reputation for brutality also acts as a deterrent.

31. The implications of perceived US support for Zaire are more valuable to Mobutu than the actual assistance he receives. Although many educated Zairians believe that the French and the Belgians also would be likely to intervene on Mobutu's behalf, they have the notion that Paris and Brussels—despite significantly larger interests to protect in Zaire—take their cue from Washington. Mobutu's detractors believe that this foreign support bolsters the incumbent and preserves the status quo, and this belief, which Mobutu reinforces, is also a major inhibitor of meaningful opposition.

32. An additional important factor that probably limits the potential for revolt is the population's fear of a repetition of the internal violence that characterized

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Zaire in the early 1960s. Mobutu's demise could touch off domestic instability that no single Zairian figure would be able to calm. Although disgruntled, many Zairians simply are apolitical; others believe that things could get worse without Mobutu.

33. While a less tangible explanation for the absence of revolt, it appears that most Zairians do not expect much from the regime. This probably works in the President's favor by lessening demands that might otherwise be placed on the government. The inclination of Zairians to accept situations they perceive as being beyond their control also works to Mobutu's advantage.

34. The country's size, diversity, and lack of social cohesion helps prevent the coalescence of a viable opposition. The central government's presence in Zaire's diverse regions, tenuous at best since independence, has deteriorated still further in recent years. Several of Zaire's regions are so physically and psychologically separated from Kinshasa that they are part of the country in name only. Deteriorating roads, shortages of fuel, and limited contact between the capital and the outlying regions contribute to their relative isolation and lessen the likelihood that a revolt would spread.

35. Ethnic and regional cleavages that migrants bring with them to the cities remain deeply rooted. This insularity helps to prevent the coalescence of a broadly based dissidence in Kinshasa or in other urban areas.

36. "Safety valves" to ameliorate economic hardships in the urban areas to some degree belie the statistical indicators pointing to ever declining living standards. Principal among these safety valves is the village origin of many urban dwellers. In times of shortages or hardship, family members go to their home villages to be fed and cared for; when they return they bring food mostly for family consumption but for sale as well. Some observers point out that 80 percent of all urban women are engaged in some sort of market activity; this contributes in small degree to alleviating the distress of urban workers.

37. Because of the responsibilities inherent in the extended family system, those members with jobs or other resources must help less fortunate relatives. This is in effect an informal but effective income redistribution and welfare system that relieves an otherwise bleak economic situation.

38. These arguments for the absence of revolt do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that Mobutu will be in power indefinitely. They do suggest, however, that the individual or group working to replace him will not be visible until very shortly before the action, if then, and may come from unexpected quarters. For example, noncommissioned and junior officers, who were clearly a major factor in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Liberia, could strike similarly in Zaire.

### The US Connection

39. The threat to sever or reduce the close US relationship to the regime is Washington's main source of influencing Mobutu to adopt reform measures he would otherwise shun. This is not, however, a very powerful source of leverage, and is diminishing as other supporters have adopted comparatively stronger roles in the wake of the two Shaba invasions. Mobutu's prospects for political survival would not be seriously diminished by a withdrawal of US support, although it would likely encourage some opponents of the regime. A clear signal that the United States would not intervene to rescue Mobutu from a Shaba III or an uprising in Kinshasa would not have a significant impact on the stability of the regime in the absence of concurrent action by France and Belgium. A drastic reduction of US aid would probably not trigger similar reactions by France and Belgium, and might even stimulate greater support by them. The impact on regional stability of a unilateral US withdrawal would likely be minimal, but would be of concern to other African nations and might tempt the Soviet Union to exploit Zairian weaknesses.

40. If, on the other hand, France and Belgium were to follow the US lead and withdraw their military personnel and their general support for Mobutu, the threat to his survival would increase markedly. The effectiveness and political reliability of key military units would rapidly decline. Mobutu's opponents, both internal and external, would have far more opportunities to hasten his downfall than is currently the case and consequently Mobutu's style of rule would probably become progressively more harsh and repressive. Mobutu would likely be desperate for foreign support and would accept it from any quarter, including the USSR.

41. But Paris and Brussels seem firmly committed to Mobutu regardless of his response to pressure for political reform. Neither appears to have any illusions about Mobutu's ability or willingness to alter the way

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he rules Zaire. As long as they can continue to get what they want from Zaire with Mobutu's cooperation they will continue to do what they can to maintain him in power.

#### Impact of Mobutu's Departure

42. There is no question that Zaire's size, its location in Africa, and its mineral wealth make it an important country. The impact on US interests of Mobutu's disappearance or overthrow would depend on the ability of a successor regime to maintain order. While there is a possibility that a military junta could manage this, we think it more likely that a prolonged and bloody struggle for power would ensue. The turmoil could well spread from Kinshasa to other parts of the country, reviving secessionist tendencies. Turbulence or disintegration in Zaire could hardly fail to impact on Zaire's neighbors in a variety of ways, not the least of which is the possibility that Zaire would again become a theater for rivalries among external powers.

43. In these circumstances Moscow would be tempted to intervene. Already present in considerable numbers in some neighboring countries, the Soviets and their Cuban allies might be convinced that they eventually could win out in Zaire. Although most of Mobutu's known opponents are not favorably disposed to the Soviets, backing from Moscow or Havana could be the crucial difference enabling new leaders to seize and maintain power. The degree to which the Soviets and Cubans would seek to become actively involved in

shaping a post-Mobutu Zaire would depend on a multitude of factors, including Soviet commitments and activities elsewhere.

44. Assuming that Zaire's cobalt production facilities are not destroyed, we are not greatly alarmed by the potential for denial of Zaire's mineral resources to the West. Zaire's own need for foreign exchange would make it very difficult for any government in Kinshasa to use its strength in cobalt supplies to exert leverage on Western countries. An unexpected and protracted cutoff of Zaire's cobalt, however, would seriously affect Western industry. (See the annex.)

45. This probably understates the noise in the world that would arise from Mobutu's overthrow and replacement by an anti-Western regime. A major impact might well be in the perceptions of African, West European, and Arab political strategists. Few now find Mobutu attractive as a national leader, but he continues, because of his past history of association with the United States and the West, to represent what was, at least at one time, a significant Western victory over hostile tendencies. Conservative African leaders might see Mobutu's departure as a further shift from a balance of forces with which they were comfortable. West Europeans would tend to blame the United States for another blunder unless Mobutu's successor were clearly in the pro-Western camp. The Arab nations might, again depending on circumstances, read Mobutu's fall as evidence of another failure of American nerve.

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## ANNEX

ZAIRE'S MINERAL IMPORTANCE TO THE WEST:  
THE COBALT CONNECTION

1. US strategic interests in Zaire, along with those of most other industrial powers outside the Communist world, are influenced by their almost total reliance on imported cobalt and by Zaire's prominent role in supply of this critical metal. Prized for its unique qualities, cobalt is regarded as essential and virtually irreplaceable in some 60 percent of its uses by volume in the United States. These include, for example: high temperature, stress-resistant superalloys for jet engines; abrasive-resistant surfaces for tools, dies, and drill bits; and catalysts for petroleum hydrogenation.

2. In terms of non-Communist world needs for cobalt, Zaire has been and will remain crucially important. Specifically, it accounts for well over half of the new cobalt entering the market each year. Last year, Zaire's output of 14,000 metric tons represented 57 percent of the non-Communist world's cobalt production, overshadowing that by any other producer. We do not believe that recent output gains and plans of other cobalt producers portend any significant diminution of Zaire's share in world cobalt production over the near future. In terms of land-based reserves, no other country has Zaire's capability for expanding output.

3. This heavy reliance on Zaire takes on special significance because of existing and potential threats to output. Zaire's cobalt industry has been increasingly strained by shortages of spare parts, inadequate maintenance, need for new equipment, and more recently by shortages of badly needed foreign technical and supervisory personnel. A major breakdown or accident that would defy on-site capabilities for repair could result in a major loss of output for a considerable time. Along with the possibilities of accidental damage, Zaire's cobalt industry, with its weak plant security, is highly vulnerable to sabotage. Action by just a few

individuals against key units, [redacted] could, in the view of experts, shut down operations for a considerable period.

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4. Stoppage in the supply of Zairian cobalt for a few months or so probably would not cause serious hardship to any consuming country, particularly in the light of current market conditions. If the cutoff were protracted, we think that within a year, serious strains and dislocations would be felt by cobalt-consuming industries in a number of countries—particularly those with heavy traditional ties to Zairian supplies. Included in this list are the United States, West Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy. If the US situation should warrant Presidential declaration of a "national emergency," strategic reserves could be allocated to keep defense and other essential producers operating for some time; the other countries would face serious operating problems.

5. The United Kingdom and West Germany would feel the impact sooner and to a greater extent than the United States, since neither country has meaningful national stockpiles of cobalt or much flexibility to employ substitutes in cobalt consuming industries. France, on the other hand, could stave off serious hardships for a considerably longer period, because it not only receives the bulk of its cobalt from Morocco but has some national stockpiles to fall back on. Japan probably also would feel the impact later than most, since it processes most of its cobalt from non-Zairian materials and can employ substitutes to a greater extent than most industrial users. Although the effects might be deferred longer in some countries than others, it seems clear that loss of some half of non-Communist world cobalt supply would take its toll directly or indirectly on all consumers.



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